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Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 27 of Security Council resolution 2205 (2015), in which the Council requested that I continue to inform it of progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and to bring to its immediate attention any serious violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 (S/2011/384, annex). It provides an update on the situation in Abyei and on the deployment and operations of UNISFA since the issuance of my previous report, of 30 January 2015 (S/2015/77), as well as on progress made in the implementation of the additional tasks mandated to UNISFA under Security Council resolution 2024 (2011) related to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

II. Security situation

2. The security situation in the Abyei Area remained relatively calm during the reporting period, despite a few significant incidents, the tensions arising from the unauthorized presence of security elements from both the Sudan and South Sudan, and the recurrent influx of small and medium-sized arms.

3. The Government of the Sudan continued to maintain from 120 to 150 oil police personnel inside the Diffra oil complex in northern Abyei, in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and multiple Security Council resolutions. UNISFA also reported incursions and the presence of small numbers of armed personnel of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern Abyei, in contravention of the same Agreement and Council resolutions. On 19 February, UNISFA troops apprehended two SPLA personnel carrying AK-47 rifles in the Noong area of Abyei. On 20 February, two additional SPLA elements armed with AK-47 rifles were apprehended in the same area. On 29 March, UNISFA troops arrested three armed SPLA soldiers near Arik, who were in possession of three AK-47 rifles, one machine gun, one rocket propelled grenade and live rounds of ammunition. All those apprehended were disarmed and later released to the national monitors of South Sudan.

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4. Several armed attacks, which resulted in loss of life, abductions and the theft of livestock, undermined the security of the civilian population and increased intercommunal tensions during the reporting period. On 2 March, Marial Achak, located 35 km east of Abyei town, was attacked by approximately 100 armed individuals from the Misseriya community. The attack resulted in the loss of three lives, the abduction of four children (two boys and two girls) and the destruction of 24 houses. UNISFA responded swiftly to the incident and was able to intercept the armed men fleeing north from Marial Achak. After a brief standoff and an exchange of fire, UNISFA troops apprehended eight of the armed individuals, who were in possession of five AK-47 rifles, more than 400 live rounds of ammunition, three motorcycles and a Motorola radio set. Among the eight detainees were one logistics officer from a local militia group, Tora Bora, and one individual who identified himself as a Sudanese Armed Forces intelligence officer. The Government of the Sudan denied that a Sudanese Armed Forces officer had participated in the attack and blamed a Sudanese Revolutionary Front militia member. It also alleged that the Misseriya militia was retaliating after a Ngok Dinka attack that had been carried out on Al-Shagag village on 26 February by elements based in Marial Achak and supported by SPLA. UNISFA could not confirm the Al-Shagag attack.

5. In another incident, on 6 April, Mikol village, north-east of Abyei, was attacked by 10 armed Misseriya militia members, during which six Dinka were killed and one was injured. UNISFA immediately launched a patrol. It located the bodies of two Misseriya assailants who had presumably been killed during the incident, but it could not intercept the attackers.

6. Following the Marial Achak incident, UNISFA engaged in negotiations with Ngok Dinka and Misseriya tribal leaders and engaged in liaison with relevant interlocutors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to secure the release of the abducted children. Concordis International assisted in tracking the abducted children with the Misseriya community in Al-Muglad, Southern Kordofan. On 9 April, UNISFA was able to secure their release. The mission then transported the children from Diffra to Abyei, where they were reunited with their families. UNISFA concurrently released the individuals it had captured. Six of the eight detainees were handed over to Misseriya tribal leaders, while the remaining two, the alleged Sudanese Armed Forces officer and the logistics officer, were handed over to the Sudanese authorities.

7. Similarly, among the individuals captured and detained following the Mantenten attack of 26 January, in which five Ngok Dinka were killed and one child was abducted, three of the assailants, who are minors, were released to Misseriya community leaders on 2 February, and the remainder were handed over to senior Misseriya community leaders in Diffra on 6 February, after receiving assurances that the return of the abducted child to his family would be facilitated and that the assailants would be held accountable and would be available to the mission for further enquiries, as required, in connection with its investigations. In the absence of a joint administration and police service, UNISFA is engaging members of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to explore how due legal process can be guaranteed in the future, to address the accountability of individuals captured in similar circumstances.

8. Concurrently, UNISFA continued to implement its multifaceted conflict prevention and mitigation strategy aimed at preventing intercommunal clashes during the migration season. It entails maintaining a disengagement area between the two communities, proactive patrolling in the disengagement area, early warning assessments, the deployment of troops in potential flashpoint areas, robust day and night deterrence patrols, aerial monitoring and frequent engagement with local communities and authorities in the Sudan and South Sudan. Three company operating bases remain deployed, in Noong, Alal and Doungap in the central sector; Marial Achak in the southern sector; and Um Khariet in the northern sector. During the reporting period, UNISFA facilitated a total of 34 joint security committee meetings in the various sectors to discuss and update members of both communities on security-related matters.

9. The absence of rule of law institutions continued to undermine the safety and security of community members, as well as respect for their human rights, particularly the rights of those held in informal community detention centres. During the reporting period, UNISFA police trained 107 unarmed community protection committee members in Agok, southern Abyei, to strengthen the knowledge and skills of its members with regard to crime prevention and detection. The deployment of UNISFA police at the Diffra team site was completed in April 2015, and efforts are under way to swiftly establish unarmed community protection committees in northern Abyei. Misseriya community leaders have been approached to identify and recommend 50 individuals for community protection committee training in Diffra. Also during the reporting period, the UNISFA police gender office trained 50 women on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

10. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to clear, survey and dispose of explosive hazards throughout the Abyei Area, facilitating freedom of movement for United Nations personnel, humanitarian actors and local communities. From 2 January to 31 March, Service teams cleared 84 km of routes within the Abyei Area and verified the safety of an additional 125 km. Teams continued to collect information on the presence of explosive hazards by conducting surveys in the towns of Abyei and Diffra as well as 56 other community settlements. Those activities resulted in the identification of a stockpile of abandoned explosive ordnance, which was subsequently destroyed. Service teams also delivered mine risk education to 23,000 community members within the Abyei Area, raising their awareness about the dangers posed by explosive remnants of war.

11. As the rainy season approaches, the southward migration of Misseriya nomads through the Abyei Area is estimated at 35,000, concentrated mainly in the northern areas of Diffra, Mekines, Farouk, Dumboloya and Goli. The total number of the Ngok Dinka population in the Abyei Area has reached approximately 82,000, suggesting an increase by 1,000 in the number of internally displaced persons returning during the reporting period.

III. Political developments

12. The new Head of Mission, Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, assumed his duties on 16 February 2015 and immediately established contacts with senior officials and key stakeholders from the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, pressing the

parties for a rapid resumption of the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee.

13. On 5 March, the Head of Mission invited senior officials from the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the Government of Ethiopia and the African Union Commission to attend a high-level security meeting that was to be held in Addis Ababa on 11 and 12 March. The main objectives of the meeting were to discuss security trends in the Abyei Area and to agree on concrete steps forward to diffuse tensions, before major incidents escalated into open fighting. The meeting, however, did not take place on the proposed dates, owing primarily to the short notice to prepare for the meeting. Nevertheless, both parties responded positively to the invitation.

14. On 24 March, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held consultations on the situation in Abyei. Council members expressed their concern over the volatility of the security situation in the Abyei Area and the occurrence of serious security incidents in previous months, including killings, abductions and cattle-raiding. In its communiqué, the Peace and Security Council also expressed deep concern over the lack of implementation of key provisions of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and, inter alia, called upon the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to urgently take the steps necessary for the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration. It also expressed support for the efforts of the African Union-designated Facilitator of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee towards the convening of a meeting of the Committee in Addis Ababa on 29 and 30 March, and called for the immediate commencement of intercommunal dialogue, as directed by the Heads of State of the Sudan and South Sudan at their summit held in November 2014.

15. The Peace and Security Council received a briefing from the African Union Commission on the investigation into the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief and UNISFA personnel on 4 May 2013. The Council recommended that the Commission engage with the parties on the findings and recommendations resulting from the investigation in order to bring closure to that incident.

16. Following the meeting of the Peace and Security Council on 24 March, the ninth meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee was held in Addis Ababa on 29 and 30 March, after a lapse of almost two years. The meeting was chaired by the Co-Chair for South Sudan, Deng Mading Mijak, after his counterpart, Hassan Ali Nimir al-Julla, had requested that he take his turn as a gesture of goodwill. The African Union facilitated the meeting, which was also attended by the UNISFA Head of Mission and the Force Commander. The meeting further benefited from the presence, on the last day, of President Thabo Mbeki, Chair of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

17. The meeting was held in a friendly, constructive and cordial atmosphere. In his introductory remarks, the African Union Facilitator remarked that the entire leadership of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee was new and that he hoped this would give a fresh impetus to the activities of the Committee. He called for stronger working relations between the parties and expressed the hope that the concerted efforts of the Committee would lead to the stabilization of the Abyei Area. In its intervention, UNISFA called for the Committee to take full responsibility for the political and administrative supervision of the management of the Abyei Area, and

to create an environment conducive to the resumption of intercommunal dialogue as well as the restoration of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

18. After extensive discussions, the parties agreed to convene a traditional leaders' meeting during the last week of April in Addis Abba, under the facilitation of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the African Union and with the support of the United Nations. They also decided to sustain support for humanitarian and recovery/development programmes in the Abyei Area, ensuring full access to aid workers, in conformity with the prevailing rules and regulations of each Government. They condemned all attacks and reaffirmed their support for making the Abyei Area a weapons-free zone. They also agreed to hold the next meeting of the Committee after the holding of the traditional leaders' dialogue.

19. Following the agreement by the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to hold a traditional leaders' dialogue at the end of April, the meeting was postponed to the second week of May owing to the participation of the Co-Chair for the Sudan in the general elections in his country, where he stood as a member of parliament in Western Kordofan. Nevertheless, UNISFA arranged the first of a series of meetings between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka tribes in Makir and Youra villages on 15 and 16 April in an effort to restore channels of communication between the two tribes at the grass-roots level.

20. Presidential, parliamentary and State legislature elections were held in the Sudan from 13 to 16 April 2015. In the Abyei Area, elections were held in the northern part of the territory, in the Misseriya-dominated areas, and no election campaigns were carried out in areas south of Diffra. The Government of the Sudan did not seek any administrative or security assistance from UNISFA for the conduct of the elections. Four polling stations opened for the vote, in Makines, al-Askar, Um Kheriet and al-Haza. The National Congress Party presented Magid Yak and Awin Zakaria Ateem as legislative candidates on behalf of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. Both had earlier represented the area in the Southern Kordofan State legislature. No security incidents occurred as a result of the elections.

IV. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

21. During the reporting period, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism conducted only one aerial monitoring mission, on 25 March. Other Mechanism aerial patrols, scheduled during the reporting period, did not take place owing to the unavailability of aircraft in February, the denial of security clearances at the tactical level by the Government of South Sudan, the late approval of the March monthly verification and monitoring plan by South Sudan and the tense security situation along the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. The aerial verification and monitoring plan for the month of April 2015 was cleared and signed by the two sides, but, as at 16 April, none of the Mechanism aerial patrols had taken place. This was due mainly to the denial of flight security clearances at the tactical level by the South Sudan brigade commander responsible for the location in question and, in one instance, the refusal of the South Sudanese patrol members to undertake the mission owing to the tense security situation in the patrol area.

22. The headquarters of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as well as the sector headquarters in Kadugli and Gok Machar, are now fully operational and ready to accommodate two additional force protection companies, scheduled to be deployed from 1 to 16 May 2015. The deployment of this force protection support will be instrumental in assisting the Mechanism in undertaking the envisioned ground patrols. The establishment of two additional sector sites in Malakal and Buram with two additional force protection units has been suspended, pending the detailed assessment of the Mechanism that I proposed in my previous report (see S/2015/77, para. 42), which is now scheduled in May.

23. Ongoing disagreement between the parties on the centreline and grid coordinates of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, particularly along the 14-mile area, creates significant challenges for the conduct of Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations, and has yet to be resolved by the parties in the context of the Joint Political Security Mechanism. No meeting of the Joint Political Security Mechanism has been held since November 2014.

24. On 13 February, an Ethiopian air force aircraft supporting a troop rotation exercise was shot at when landing at the Kadugli airport. The aircraft was carrying 96 troops and four crew members. Although no casualties were sustained during the attack, the incident raises serious concerns over the security of UNISFA and Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism personnel and their ability to operate safely in and out of Kadugli. The mission held consultations with the Government of the Sudan, as well as with United Nations agencies, to conduct a threat assessment regarding the use of Kadugli airport and to ensure safe UNISFA air operations.

V. Humanitarian situation

25. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to some 82,000 internally displaced persons and returnees in southern areas of Abyei, in the areas of food security, health and nutrition, education, shelter, water sanitation and hygiene. Approximately 15,000 people in northern areas of Abyei were assisted in the areas of health and nutrition, education, water sanitation and hygiene, building on the findings of the inter-agency humanitarian and recovery needs assessment carried out in late December 2014. Those findings were endorsed by the Co-Chair for the Sudan of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee in early April, allowing for the roll-out of an agreed humanitarian action plan for northern areas of Abyei.

26. An additional 6,800 internally displaced persons from Unity State, South Sudan, were supported across all sectors, while some 823 people newly displaced in Rumameer, following the attack on Marial Achak in March, were provided with food rations and other assistance. With effect from March, food rations for all beneficiaries other than internally displaced persons from Unity State were cut by 50 per cent, owing to funding shortfalls. In addition to food aid, key activities in the areas of food security and employment included vocational training for women and youths and the provision of seeds and tools as well as agricultural training for farmers.

27. In terms of health and nutrition, 17 functional health centres in the Abyei Area, complemented by mobile clinics, provided basic health and nutrition support

services to the two communities. Support for education continued with the provision of basic teaching and learning materials and the rehabilitation of classrooms. A key challenge in the education and health/nutrition sectors was the shortage of government staff. Agreements were signed by UNICEF with a local non-governmental organization, for enhanced provision of education and child protection services, and by the World Food Programme with the same organization, for nutrition activities in the northern areas of Abyei.

28. A total of 229 hand pumps have been provided and 42 water yards built in the Abyei Area to address the safe water needs of the two communities, including internally displaced persons, host communities/returnees and nomads. The rehabilitation of broken water points continued alongside the promotion of safe hygiene and sanitation practices. Some non-food items such as jerry cans were provided to the most vulnerable groups, including the 823 persons internally displaced from Marial Achak to Rumameer and other southern areas.

29. Monitoring activities to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable from violence, exploitation and other human rights abuses continued in return areas and sites for internally displaced persons. Specific protection activities included family tracing and reunification activities for separated children, the identification of foster families for vulnerable children such as orphans, and the training of traditional leaders, youths and women on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

VI. Personnel deployment and mission support

30. As at 7 April 2015, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,066 personnel (120 military observers, 101 staff officers and 3,845 troops), out of an authorized strength of 5,326 (see annex I). The strength of the UNISFA police component stood at 29 police officers from six police contributing countries, out of an authorized strength of 50. In view of the failure by the parties to establish the Abyei Police Service, which UNISFA is mandated to advise and train, the remaining authorized officers were not deployed.

31. During the reporting period, UNISFA completed the construction of facilities for the five dry season deployment sites, in Noong, Doungop, Alal, Marial Achak and Um Khariet, as well as the deployment of troops and military observers to those sites. The construction of the sixth site, in Agany Toak, is now in progress.

32. Although the completion of the airport at Athony and office and living accommodations for United Nations police in Diffra and the rehabilitation of major roads and other facilities for the troops are under way, the ongoing restrictions placed by the Government of the Sudan on the delivery of red laterite soil, aggregates and other construction materials from the Sudan remain an impediment to the timely completion of critical construction projects before the onset of the rainy season.

33. Thirty-three containers with prefabricated accommodation sets and other equipment have been delivered to Gok Machar, and the construction of hard-wall accommodation in Gok Machar is in progress. The rehabilitation of existing accommodation in Kadugli is also under way. The building of a turnkey fuel and associated fuel services distribution point in Gok Machar camp and the drilling of two more new boreholes in Kadugli are in progress.

34. The mission has conducted 96 airlifts between Kadugli and Abyei and completed the rotation of 1,057 troops. Fifty-four new light vehicles and three forklifts have also arrived at the mission.

VII. Financial aspects

35. The General Assembly, by its resolution 68/258 B, appropriated the amount of $318.9 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.

36. As at 16 April 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to $74.2 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2,167.6 million.

37. Reimbursement to the contributing government for troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 28 February 2015 and 31 December 2014, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

38. I commend the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan for the resumption of the activities of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, the constructive atmosphere in which its deliberations took place, and their decision to quickly hold a traditional leaders' dialogue meeting. I call upon the two Co-Chairs of the Committee to work collaboratively with the African Union Commission and the traditional leaders to help ensure the success of that important meeting.

39. This reopening of the channels of communication and resumption of cooperation with regard to the management of Abyei by the parties should help to create the conducive environment necessary for the two communities to find closure on the tragic assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief and restore the grass-roots mechanisms of cooperation necessary to sustain their respective livelihoods.

40. I call upon both parties to translate this renewed spirit of cooperation into concrete steps towards the resolution of issues that have remained unaddressed for far too long, including the resumption of the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011, the establishment of the joint Abyei Police Service and the withdrawal of the Diffra oil police. I urge the two parties to build on the existing momentum and agree to the holding of a second meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee as soon as possible following the holding of the traditional leaders' dialogue, to address the implementation of their past decisions, including the concrete steps required to ensure that Abyei is maintained as a weapons-free zone.

41. I remain very concerned about the recent attacks carried out in Mantenten, Marial Achak and Mikol by Misseriya militias and the repeated entry of armed SPLA elements inside the Abyei Area. Both Governments need to guarantee that armed elements operating on their respective territories remain outside the Abyei Area and that their respective armed forces also refrain from entering Abyei.

42. The abduction of children during security incidents is particularly deplorable and unacceptable. I thank the Government of the Sudan for its assistance in the

release of the four children taken in Marial Achak and urge it, as well as Misseriya community leaders, to redouble their efforts to locate and return the child abducted in Mantenten.

43. The lack of progress in establishing the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and identifying its centreline, as well as the implementation of border security arrangements and border crossing corridors, despite the parties' recommitment to the cooperation agreements of 27 September 2012, has led to a worrisome inertia with regard to border security matters. I call upon the parties to overcome their dispute on the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone zero line and convene a meeting of the Joint Political Security Mechanism to address that issue. I will present the findings of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism assessment in my June report to the Council as it considers the renewal of the UNISFA mandate in July 2015.

44. In conclusion, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, the new Head of Mission, and to Major General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, the Force Commander, for their efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Abyei Area, often under very difficult conditions. I also commend my Special Envoy, Haile Menkerios, as well as President Thabo Mbeki, the African Union Commission, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Government of Ethiopia, and thank them for their active engagement in support of the stabilization of Abyei.

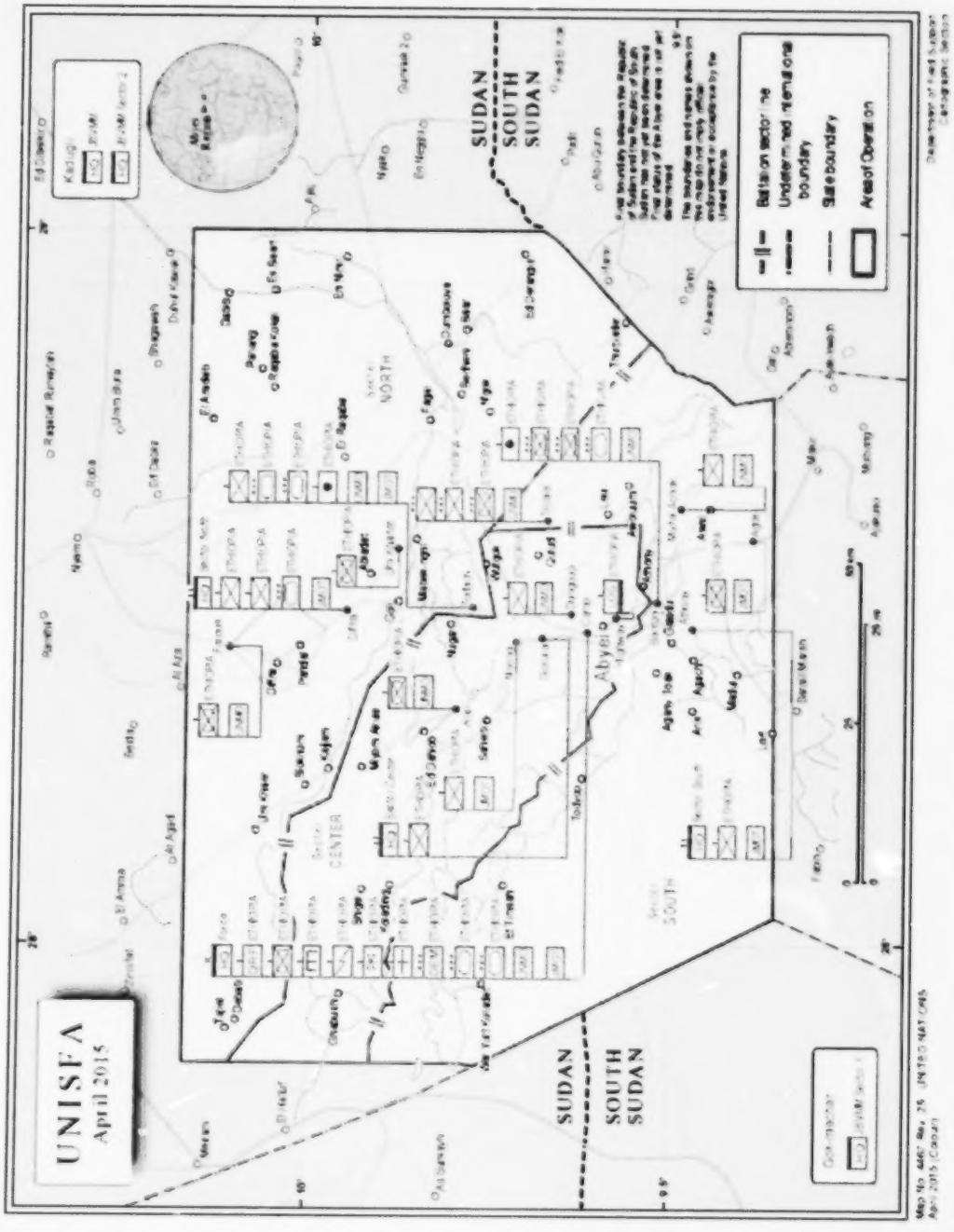
Annex I

Composition of the military component of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, including the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

Country	*Description*	*Personnel*	*Total*
Benin	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Brazil	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Burkina Faso	Experts on mission	1	1
Burundi	Experts on mission	1	1
Cambodia	Experts on mission	1	1
Ecuador	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Ethiopia	Experts on mission	77	3 997
	Contingent troop	3 920	
Ghana	Experts on mission	2	4
	Contingent troop	2	
Guatemala	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Guinea	Experts on mission	1	1
Indonesia	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
India	Experts on mission	2	4
	Contingent troop	2	
Kyrgyzstan	Experts on mission	1	1
Malawi	Contingent troop	1	1
Mali	Contingent troop	1	1
Mongolia	Experts on mission	2	2
Namibia	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Nepal	Experts on mission	1	3
	Contingent troop	2	
Nigeria	Contingent troop	2	2
Peru	Contingent troop	1	1
Russian Federation	Experts on mission	1	1
Rwanda	Experts on mission	2	4
	Contingent troop	2	
Sri Lanka	Experts on mission	5	6
	Contingent troop	1	

Country	*Description*	*Personnel*	*Total*
Ukraine	Experts on mission	4	6
	Contingent troop	2	
United Republic of Tanzania	Experts on mission	3	3
Yemen	Experts on mission	4	6
	Contingent troop	2	
Zambia	Experts on mission	1	2
	Contingent troop	1	
Total		**4 066**	**4 066**

Annex II


UNISFA
April 2015
SUDAN
SOUTH SUDAN
Abyei
Battalion sector line
Undetermined international boundary
State boundary
Area of Operation